

Jones earns Congressional badge

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PANAMA CITY — The Bay District School Board room was packed Tuesday afternoon, but there was silence as Mike Jones wiped away tears while Congressman Steve Southerland placed a congressional badge around his neck.

“I feel very blessed and very humble,” said Mike Jones, Bay District Schools chief of security.

Southerland presented Jones with the Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery for his actions during the 2010 School Board shooting. He also received a letter of gratitude from U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and the U.S. attorney general.

“Today I’m not here about me at all,” said Southerland, R-Panama City. “I will say that oftentimes in our society we return back to places where acts of bravery have been displayed and where lives have changed.”

The award ceremony was held in the same board room where Jones engaged in a firefight with gunman Clay Duke during a School Board meeting in December 2010.

“This is holy ground, where people’s lives were saved due to the selfless acts of one man,” Southerland said. “Scripture is very clear that there is no greater love than he who would lay down his life for a friend, and the representatives of the School Board sitting behind me are friends of Mike Jones.”

Jones was nominated for the badge of bravery by Superintendent Bill Husfelt and Karen Tucker, the district public information officer. The badges are awarded annually by the U.S. Attorney General and are presented by the recipient’s Congressional representative.

The qualifications for the distinction include performing an act characterized as bravery by the agency head who makes the nomination that placed the individual at risk of serious physical injury or death. There have been only 21 badges given out, according to a representative of Southerland’s office.

After donning the badge, Jones recounted flashbacks of the day of the shooting. He spoke about how he learned to shoot one-handed nearly 40 years ago.

“I shot one-handed that day and that’s the only way I could do it that day,” Jones said.

He also recounted not being surprised by Ginger Littleton trying to come to the other board members’ defense by swinging her purse at the gun held by Duke, because she’s a “tough bird.”

Finally, Jones spoke about his health complications after the shooting. The adrenaline caused his heart to speed up. Jones said he knew he could let loose and relax when he was surrounded by his friends and peers in law enforcement after the shooting because he knew everyone was safe.

“If I could break this in half, I would give the other half to Bill Husfelt,” Jones said. “On that day he said, ‘I sign the papers; let everyone else go.’ That man is a hero. He didn’t have a gun or a badge and he had a

barrel of a gun staring him in the face. That man is my hero.”

Husfelt refuted the comment.

“I’m not a hero,” he said. “I couldn’t leave; Mike didn’t have to come into the room. That’s why he’s the hero.”

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